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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

Priority theme: enhancing social protection and reducing
vulnerability in a globalizing world

Statement submitted by Pax Christi International, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2001/1.



Pax Christi International offers suggestions related to the priority theme of the thirty-ninth session of the Commission: Social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world. By "social protection", we understand the responsibility of societies to see that the fundamental needs of all are met, based on universal human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural. "Vulnerability" we understand as the high probability that some groups and individuals will be denied social protection unless affirmative action is taken to secure their human right to protection.

We want to see the Commission grapple with linkages between social development and sustainable development, human rights, and peace and security. In each case the Commission can contribute by analysis of these linkages and by promoting the widespread dissemination of accounts of good practices in social protection and the reduction of vulnerability in a globalizing world.

Social and sustainable development

The stalemate in negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is clearly a matter of urgency for social development as well as sustainable development. The Commission for Social Development should play a role in sounding the alarm about this issue. The Commission can also call for the dissemination of good practices in reduction of carbon emissions and in pollution reduction, particularly at the national policy level, but also by the private sector.

Another issue of linkage is water use. For example, the use of water in Israel and Palestine has far-reaching consequences. The Israelis use seven times more water per capita than do the Palestinians. They also control most of the water sources and thereby restrict Palestinian use of water. There is a lack of cooperation between the two parties that is leading to further social inequities and serious environmental degradation. The Commission for Social Development should work towards fostering dialogue and technical cooperation between Israel and Palestine on the sharing of their limited water resources. Such a dialogue is all the more critical given the breakdown of normal political communication at present.

Social development and human rights

The report of the United Nations Development Programme for 2000 challenges economic policies that do not reflect equal rights for all. The report urges international bodies, including the World Trade Organization, to be guided by human rights principles and commitments in decision-making. The report also tells global corporations that making profits is not enough; they have responsibilities to respect human rights, too. We would like to see the Commission for Social Development initiate fact-finding into good practices of social development arising from globalization and the expansion of multinational corporations into the poorer countries that exemplify linkages between social development and respect for human rights. At the same time, negative impacts of globalization on poor people in developing countries must not be glossed over or minimized.

Preparations have begun for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Spain in 2002. Here is an opportunity for the Commission for Social Development to collaborate with the Global Meeting of Generations in intergenerational dialogues about the implications of extended lifespans on a whole range of issues rightly seen as falling under the priority theme of this session of the Commission and the future work of the Commission in preparation for the Assembly in 2002. This is an area in which the close relationship of rights to responsibilities can be highlighted effectively.

Social development and peace and security

The Commission for Social Development can take leadership in calling attention to good practices in accord with ILO Convention No. 182, on eliminating the worst forms of child labour. This Convention came into force only last year. Now is the time to research and hold up models of compliance with the Convention.

The ILO Convention includes child soldiers as one of the worst forms of child labour. A child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including — but not limited to — cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms. Here indeed is an

area of great concern regarding social protection and the reduction of vulnerability.

The arms trade is a major factor working against social protection and social development. We would like to see the Commission become an effective voice for the victims of this lethal trade. Some of the industrialized States that built enormous arsenals during the Cold War now equip intrastate wars which ravage entire societies and make a mockery of social development.

Internationally there are multiplying efforts to provide training for ways of preventing armed conflicts based on education and training for peace services grounded on active non-violence. We ask the Commission to sponsor a study of this emerging international movement in its varied expressions as a good practice in social development.

For the past five years the Commission for Social Development has helped keep alive the commitments of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. These commitments will continue to challenge the work of the Commission and rightly serve as focal points of its work. We urge a development of methodology in the work of the Commission, through linkages with efforts at sustainable development, human rights, and peace and security. This work should include both rigorous analysis and gathering and dissemination of good practices that can inspire, hope and animate both Governments and civil society to effective action.